

NSC BRIEFING

6 June 1956

U NU'S RESIGNATION

1. The resignation of U Nu--Burma's first and to date only prime minister--threatens to be disadvantageous to us for two reasons. First, it is not clear whether his stabilizing influence will continue to be felt after his departure from government office. Second, the fundamental political persuasions of his successor, Defense Minister Ba Swe, are obscure.

2. Numerous reasons have been advanced for Nu's withdrawal. He himself has said he wants time off in order to purge the political party which he heads, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), of "Communists, fellow travelers, ideological sympathizers, etc."

In the past, Nu has often spoken of leaving office and becoming a Buddhist monk.

An "anonymous" letter by Nu, published in a leading Rangoon paper,

laments the evident failure of his "neutral" foreign policy.

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C. Although Nu has privately denied it, he may also have been asked to quit. Ba Swe's Socialist Party, which dominates the AFPFL, has reportedly become dissatisfied with Nu's extravagant expenditures on religious projects and emphasis on morality in government. The Socialists want to rule in their own right, and they may have pressured him into resignation. [REDACTED]

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4. The personalities of Nu and his probable successor are sharply divergent:

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A. Nu had a strictly moral approach to politics, [REDACTED]

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B. Nu basks happily in the public limelight, but Ba Swe prefers to work [REDACTED] behind the scenes.

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C. Nu is deeply religious; [REDACTED]

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5. As prime minister, Ba Swe may adopt a softer policy toward Burma's internal Communist problem. In 1950, he almost broke with the Socialists to join the pro-Communist Burma Workers and Peasants Party.

A. There is evidence Ba Swe believes that political accommodation is a better way to solve Burmese Communist insurgency than military suppression.

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B. On international issues, Ba Swe's attitude is somewhat contradictory. He has lavished praise on the Peiping regime; attends Soviet and Chinese diplomatic functions more frequently than Western ones; and is soon to visit Moscow and Peiping. At the same time, he seems to have been satisfied with Nu's neutral foreign policy, agreeable to Colombo Plan aid and favorable to US economic and military assistance.

5. The only certainty about Ba Swe's future course is that it will be primarily directed at maintaining and increasing his own and Socialist Party control of the AFPFL and Burma's government. This might mean "peace" with Communist insurgents at home but, for the present, does not suggest any significant modification of foreign policy.

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